IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method to detect and reward the return of shopping carts to collection points at a shopping center, wherein during a purchase, a first signal A is generated and when a shopping cart is returned to a collection point, a second signal B is generated, and wherein the two signals A and B are correlated to issue a bonus, comprising;

assigning the first signal A to a certain customer by identifying or individualizing the customer by optical recognition of physical characteristics of the customer; and

correlating the first signal A with the second signal B.

2. (original) A method according to claim 1, further comprising

generating the second signal B when any shopping cart is returned to a collection point.

3. (previously presented) A method according to claim 2, further comprising

only generating the second signal B when the returned shopping cart had previously been located outside of the collection point for longer than a preset time period.

4. (previously presented) A method according to claim 2, further comprising

only generating the second signal B when the shopping cart had been previously used to go shopping.

5. (cancelled)

6. (cancelled)

7. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the customer is re-recognized to generate signal B using an optical recognition system.

8 – 15. (cancelled)

16. (currently amended) A system for detecting and rewarding the returning of shopping carts to a collection point, comprising a first detection means (5) to generate a first signal A during a purchase and a second detection means (7) to generate a second signal B when a shopping cart (1) is returned to a collection point (6), and a data processing unit to correlate the two signals A and B to issue a bonus,

the first detection means (5) is for identifying or individualizing a particular customer by optical recognition <u>of physical characteristics of the customer</u> when generating the first signal A.

17 – 21 (cancelled)

22. (previously presented) A system according to claim 16, wherein

the second detection means (18) further includes means for recognizing whether the returned shopping cart (1) has been stored into the shopping cart stacked row provided at the collection point (6) within a prescribed tolerance.

23. (previously presented) A system according to claim 16, wherein

the first detection means (5) includes an optical signal transmitter (15) located in the shopping center and the second detection means includes a second optical signal transmitter (18) at the collection point (6), and a number of optical detectors (17) that cooperate with the first and the second signal transmitters (15, 18), said detectors being attached to the shopping carts (1) and being provided for the generation of signals A and B.

24. (original) A system according to claim 23, wherein

the optical detectors (17) are provided with a read-write device (24) to write the customer-owned data medium which comprises a chip card (25).

25. (original) A system according to claim 23, wherein

a wireless forwarding of signals A and B to the customer-owned data medium is

provided.

26. (previously presented) A system according to claim 23, wherein

at least one of the first and/the second optical signal transmitter (15, 18) are made up of IR light sources.

27. (previously presented) A system according to claim 23, wherein

the first optical signal transmitter (15) comprises a light signal (16) that is modulated according to normal lighting of the shopping center.

28. (previously presented) A system according to claim 23, wherein

the second optical signal transmitter (18) comprises of a light signal (19) that is modulated according to the normal lighting of the collection point (6).

29. (new) A method according to claim 1, further comprising checking

a status of the bonus by the customer through an Internet connector.

30. (new) A system according to claim 16, wherein

a status of the bonus is viewable by the customer through an Internet connector.